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Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management

The difficulties associated with adopting NIMS in a DoD Fire Department

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expression, or writings of another.

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Abstract

The problem was that the Air Force Academy fire department did not know if NIMS could be easily implemented at the installation. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the benefits and obstacles to NIMS implementation. A descriptive research methodology was used. Procedures involved examining NIMS implementation in other organizations. Literature review and interviews provided answers to four questions: (a) what were the statutory requirements for implementing NIMS at a military installation? (b) what were the benefits of implementing NIMS within a fire department? (c) what obstacles impeded implementing NIMS within a DoD fire department? (d) what actions were other DoD fire departments taking to implement NIMS? This research's recommendations suggest the value of NIMS is worth the effort.

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Introduction

The problem was that the Air Force Academy fire department does not know if NIMS can be implemented at an Air Force installation without a paradigm shift by military leadership, and, as a result, the department may be wasting valuable financial and personnel resources towards trying to implement the National Incident Management System (NIMS) at the Air Force Academy. The nation received a policy directive from the President in February 2003, and the NIMS was released in March 2004. These enabling directives required the implementation of NIMS but there was no real incentive, as a federal entity, to implement the process in a timely fashion. In a letter from the Department of Homeland Security (HLS) to all Governors, it states "All Federal departments and agencies are required to adopt the NIMS…" (T. Ridge, personal communication, September 8, 2004). The letter went on to say, "…assistance will be conditioned by full compliance with the NIMS". Since federal entities cannot receive federal assistance, the Air Force Academy was facing a decision on whether or not to expend the effort to pursue NIMS compliance immediately.

The research purpose was to evaluate the benefits of NIMS implementation at a military installation, and, more specifically, at the Air Force Academy. It was hypothesized that immediate NIMS implementation provided benefits to the organization, in spite of the lack of the apparent statutory requirement to support this. Furthermore, it was believed that since there were not a significant number of federal fire departments that are NIMS compliant, the value of the process from a DoD perspective was in question. For the purposes of this research, the author developed four research questions in order to gather data related to this subject:

1) What are the statutory requirements for implementing NIMS at a military installation?

2) What are the benefits with implementing NIMS within a fire service organization?

3) What obstacles are there to implementing NIMS within a DoD fire department?

4) What actions are other DoD fire departments taking to implement NIMS?

The main research method utilized was the descriptive method. A two page survey was developed (Appendix A) to gather data related to the implementation of NIMS within DoD fire departments. Readers of this research should note that the survey was limited in scope to federal fire departments to ensure the survey accurately reflected similar size and type fire departments as the Air Force Academy.

Background and Significance

The Air Force Academy is an atypical military installation with a unique mission. On the surface, it is a college campus, but it is built within an Air Force base. The installation is home to the campus, a commercial area, residential areas, industrial areas, and an active military airport. Challenges realized by the fire department are not much different than those faced by the local community.

The author of this research project returned from the *Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management* (EAFSOEM) course at the National Fire Academy in November of 2005, four years after the tragic events of September, 2001. The events of 9/11 led to the development of the National Response Plan (NRP) and the NIMS, but the EAFSOEM course led to a change at the Air Force Academy as it related to the management of emergency scene operations. Whereas emergency scene management on a military installation is based on common practices within the fire service, the EAFSOEM course provided the framework to " … understand the roles of the National Incident Management System … " (National Fire Academy, [Student Manual], 2005).

This research project relates to objective 5 of the United States Fire Administration's Operational Objectives, "To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (National Fire Academy, 2003). NIMS is one of the hottest issues in the United States, as fire service leaders determine how to fully implement the process in various size and type fire departments throughout the nation. Since NIMS is directly related to this important emerging national issue, the rationale for completing this research project became even more apparent.

The Air Force Academy is a federal installation, and is required to comply with Air Force and Department of Defense (DoD) Instructions. Air Force Instruction 10-802, *Military Support to Civil Authorities* (1994) established the framework for emergency response by military authorities into the local community. This directive stated "Imminently serious conditions resulting from any civil emergency or attack may require immediate action by military commanders to save lives …" (p. 9). While this directive was written 12 years ago, it foreshadowed response requirements into the local community.

The author discovered a personal communication from the Office of the Air Force Civil Engineer that indicated that the Air Force intended to develop its own NIMS process (L.D. Fox, personal communication, April 7, 2005). The letter stated specifically, "… we started the process of incorporating significant aspects of the National Incident Management System … in the development of an Air Force Incident Management System (AFIMS)". Fox went on to say, "The AFIMS will be compliant with the intent and guidelines established by NIMS, while preserving the unique military requirements ...". This communication was brought to the attention of the senior staff at the Air Force Academy, which caused quite a stir.

On a local level, the need for this research project was explained to the fire marshal at the Air Force Academy, since it was brought to light that NIMS implementation would involve both

direct and indirect costs. Although NIMS was not a new concept, it certainly was a different way to manage emergency incidents, especially at the Air Force Academy. Since the fire marshal at the Air Force Academy had changed twice since NIMS was first released, a justification of the entire process was needed before proceeding. This research provided an excellent forum for just that.

Literature Review

The author performed an extensive literature review which included a wide variety of sources, including those not related to the fire service. The literature search and review supports the research questions and also provides the basic layout of this section. The research questions to be answered by this literature review are:

Question 1. What are the statutory requirements for implementing NIMS at a military installation?

Question 2. What are the benefits of implementing NIMS within a fire service organization?

Question 3. What obstacles are there to implementing NIMS in a DoD fire department?

Question 4. What actions are other DoD fire departments taking to implement NIMS?

At the conclusion of this section there will be a summary on how findings and observations of others have influenced this research project.

Statutory Requirements

The literature review for this research question was limited to those documents that directly affected an Air Force fire department. As stated previously, the Air Force Academy is subjected to both DoD Directives and Air Force Instructions.

The first document reviewed to determine the answer to research question one was actually published well before any NIMS documents. DoD Directive 3025.1, *Military Support to*

Civil Authorities (MSCA) (1993) established the authority for federal entities to respond into the civilian community. The directive stated, " …shall plan for, and respond to, requests from civilian government agencies for military support in dealing with actual or anticipated consequences of civil emergencies …" (p. 2). The directive went on to say, "It is the policy of the Federal Government to provide an orderly and continuing means … to alleviate the suffering and damage that result from major disasters or emergencies" (p. 3). The applicability to the Air Force was clearly defined in the directive, "Applies to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments … refers to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard …" (p. 2).

The Air Force understood the need to update its instruction on Military Support to the civilian community (previously published in 1994). Accordingly, the Air Force re-issued the implementation instruction known as Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-802, *Military Support to Civil Authorities* (2002). This updated document "… implements DoD Directive 3025.1, *Military Support to Civil Authorities* …" (p. 1). In this document, the following mission statement is provided:

> "Homeland Security includes domestic preparedness, critical infrastructure protection, and civil support in case of attacks on civilians, continuity of government, continuity of military operations, border and coastal defense, and national missile defense. MSCA operations are part of the nation's Homeland Security campaign" (p. 3)

Finally, this Air Force implementation instruction provided the following guidance, "The Secretary of the Air Force ensures the readiness of Active and Reserve components to execute plans for MSCA and oversees Air Force participation in MSCA planning …" (p. 5).

The next literature reviewed was Air Force Instruction 10-2501, *Full Spectrum Threat Response (FSTR) Planning and Operations* (2002). This document, " … captures the complete incident response cycle, from planning to response and recovery" (p. 7). This Air Force Instruction describes, " … the Air Force approach to planning, organizing, training and equipping personnel to … respond to … major accidents, natural disasters, or terrorist use of Weapons of Mass Destruction" (p. 7).

The White House released *Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5* (2003). This document was reviewed for applicability to an Air Force fire department. This document provided, "All Federal departments and agencies shall cooperate with the Secretary in the Secretary's domestic incident management role" (p. 2). It went on to say, "Beginning in Fiscal Year 2005 … shall make adoption of the NIMS a requirement … for providing Federal preparedness assistance through grants …" (p. 7).

A review of the NIMS document provided the actual implementation guidance from the federal government. It provided the framework for the process, as well as specific instructions for individual organizations. *National Incident Management System* (2004) provided the following insight, "HSPD-5 requires all Federal departments and agencies to adopt the NIMS …" (p. ix). The document further stated, " … requires Federal department and agencies to make adoption of the NIMS by State and local organizations a condition of Federal preparedness assistance (through grants, contracts, and other activities) beginning in FY 2005" (p. ix).

The final literature reviewed for this research question was a personal communication from Major General L. Dean Fox from the Pentagon (L.D. Fox, personal communication, April 7, 2005). The letter stated, "Although HSPD-5 does not have international implications, our goal is to establish an Air Force Incident Management System (AFIMS) effective at all of our

installations worldwide". Fox went on to say, "It is premature … to begin the implementation process … in the absence of Air Force approved guidance …".

A search at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) of the National Fire Academy resulted in finding several research papers related to this subject. Unfortunately, the lack of body of knowledge in the LRC, as related to DoD fire departments, precluded the use of any existing research for this project.

Benefits of implementing NIMS

The amount and diversity of research material available to answer this question was amazing. Before NIMS was even published by DHS, articles were found in professional journals that lambasted the impending new process. In *Fire Engineering*, Manning (2003) stated, "But it's sheer lunacy … for the federal bureaucrats to insist that local fire departments change their command system …" (p. 10). Manning also provided this opinion, "It's not particularly suited for the urban crisis management mode" (p. 10). Finally, Manning said, "Reconstructing command systems nationwide is beyond absurd, it's criminal" (p. 10).

Before NIMS was released, Kreis (2004) stated, "I don't know how successful they will be at developing a national system, but it looks like they are making significant progress" (p. 73). He went on to say, "The system is designed to increase the effectiveness of command and firefighter safety" (p. 74). Kreis closed the article by asking, "This is a noble cause, but who's looking out for us locals on a daily basis" (p. 84)?

In 2004, after the NIMS was released, a substantial amount of literature became available for review, including from a diverse cross section of industry in the United States. In an article in *Engineering Management Journal*, Anderson, Compton and Mason (2004) found, "The new National Incident Management System (NIMS) is an evolutionary result of years of planning and

experience to accommodate the growth and threats facing our emergency response personnel" (p. 3). Anderson et al (2004) also found, "NIMS standardizes incident management for all hazards across all levels of government" (p. 4). In a *Professional Safety* article, it was stated, " … emergency responders can be protected within the incident command system, the overarching management structure for disaster response called for under the newly established NIMS … this would prevent … wasting time trying to … protect workers on a case-by-case basis …" ("New Approach", 2004, p. 1). In a *Military & Aerospace Electronics* article written about prioritizing the acquisition of new technologies, it was found, "First they have to make a precise list of the technologies and equipment they need. That is a function of the NIMS, which dictates how emergency responders behave at an emergency scene" (Ames, 2004, p. 4). In another review of a non-fire service related publication, Lazur (2004), stated, "Enhancing preparedness through pre-incident mitigation activities is another objective of NIMS" (p. 11). Lazur went on to say, "Offense is still the best defense. But in the event that we are placed under attack, we must have effective ways of dealing with it" (p. 12).

In an article regarding wild land fire fighting, Brown (2005) found, "The implementation of the NIMS after 9/11 further signals the value to our nation of working together" (p. 12). Brown went on to say, "NIMS is the umbrella system designed to integrate the best incident management systems into a national framework used for any incident …" (p. 12).

In 2005, a lot of diverse literature became available regarding NIMS implementation. "NIMS has universally incorporated unified command (UC). The use of a unified command is nothing new" (Reardon, 2005, p. 75). Reardon also stated, " … some adjustments have to be made because the ICS was developed by the fire service for the fire service and will now be used by other, nontraditional response agencies" (p. 75). In an article on disaster preparedness, Friel

& Singer (2005) found, "By October 1, 2006, state and local emergency response agencies must certify that they are implementing NIMS before they can qualify for any homeland security money" (p. 33). Friel & Singer went on to say, "But the system is still a work in progress" (p. 37). In an article in *U.S. News & World Report*, Barnes, et al. (2005) stated, " … the National Incident Management System … aimed at mimicking the tactics used by effective responders out west" (p. 46). Regarding the use of ICS in the west, they went on to say, " … it took his charges [meaning his fire fighters] about a decade to get the system down" (p. 46).

Brown (2005) found, "The National Incident Management System can be used on a local level to coordinate an efficient and effective response operation" (p. 39). He also provided this perspective, "NIMS can be used as an overall framework to guide your decisions in key aspects of disaster management" (p. 39). Wilmoth (2005) asked, " … why not give NIMS as chance to work and back it with funding" (p. 6)?

Providing another perspective, Halton (2005), said, "The local aspect is key because Coppell, Texas is not and will never be New York City in size resources, vulnerability, and capability" (p. 24). Halton went on to say, "One size does not fit all. We understand the concepts and principals of NIMS and will use NIMS when disasters strike" (p. 24).

Finally, in a snippet in Fire Chief magazine (DHS/FEMA, 2005), it was said, " … continued resistance to complying with NIMS requirements and using plain language eventually will result in the loss of federal preparedness funding…" (p. 57).

Actions other DoD fire departments are taking to implement NIMS

The literature review for question three in this research was completed using an author developed questionnaire. The result of this questionnaire will be discussed in the appropriate section of this research. Table 1 contains the questions that were used in this questionnaire.

Table 1

Actions other DoD fire departments are taking to implement NIMS

Have you fully implemented NIMS?
What actions have you taken to implement NIMS (be specific)?
Please list any written guidance from your branch of service that requires you to implement NIMS.

Note: Table created from author's questionnaire sent to DoD Fire Departments

Obstacles to implementing NIMS in a DoD fire department

The literature review for question four in this research was also completed using an author developed questionnaire. The result of this questionnaire will also be discussed in the appropriate section. Table 2 contains the questions that were used in this questionnaire.

Table 2

Obstacles to implementing NIMS

Have you fully implemented NIMS?
If no, please indicate from list below why you have not.
If you have implemented NIMS, please indicate below any obstacles that you may have encountered during the process.

Note: Table created from author's questionnaire sent to DoD Fire Departments

Literature Review Summary

To summarize the findings of this literature review, it can be said that the findings and observations of others had a direct impact on this author's research. The literature review for question one was somewhat straight forward, but the review of available literature for question two had a dramatic impact on this research project. While NIMS may be prevalent in the fire

service, it also recognized as having an impact in other public service sectors. This was a huge finding during the course of the research, and resulted in a review of areas that did not seem important initially. Finally, the review of responses provided by respondents to the survey, as well as personal interviews, provided insight to challenges and issues faced by similar type fire departments as the Air Force Academy.

Procedures

The procedures used during this research project were divided into the following three main areas: (a) conduct a survey (b) personal observations, and (c) interviews. In addition, an extensive literature review was conducted to determine the answers to the research questions.

Research Methodology

The primary research method used for this project was descriptive, although aspects of evaluative research were used during the course of the literature review.

Survey

A survey was developed for this project for the purpose of determining how many other DoD fire service organizations were working through the NIMS implementation process. This survey, which can be found in Appendix A, was developed by examining the research questions, then determining how to appropriately phrase the questions so as to not bias the results. After the questions were developed, a small pool of selected organizations was presented the questions to determine if they were valid, clear and concise. When it came time to send out the survey, the size of the sample was simply determined by the number of DoD fire service agencies. Specifically, the survey was sent to each of the four branches of the U.S. military: (a) Air Force (including, as a subset, the National Guard and the Reserves), (b) Army, (c) Navy, and (d) Marines. The reason for selecting these potential respondents was simple; they represented the

same or similar size organizations with comparable issues and restrictions as the Air Force Academy Fire Department. In January 2006, this survey was sent to the chief of fire & emergency services of each branch of the military, with a request that they forward the survey to each of their respective military installations. A limitation of the survey was noted almost immediately, since there was a lack of very many military fire departments that have completed the NIMS implementation process. Even so, 34 respondents provided their input to this survey, resulting in an excellent cross section of DoD fire service agencies. A listing of the agencies that responded is provided in Appendix B. The results of the survey, including an analysis of the same, can be found in the next section of this research project.

Personal Observations

In addition to conducting the survey, the author made personal observations DoD NIMS implementation process. Included in this observation were: (a) a review of comments provided by respondents of the survey, and (b) interviews with personnel that were knowledgeable of the process.

Interviews

In an effort to determine the magnitude and scope of the issue, the author interviewed two staff members of the Air Force Academy Emergency Management Division, and one retired fire chief. In addition, an instructor from the National Fire Academy was interviewed. Their opinions are important to this research since they have all been involved in NIMS implementations at various levels. A listing of subject matter experts is provided in Appendix C of this paper. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the answer to research questions three and four, which related to the obstacles associated with NIMS implementation, and what actions other DoD fire departments are taking to implement NIMS.

Limitations

The author realizes that limitations to a project can not only affect the outcome, but potentially change the results. Accordingly, great care was taken to ensure that limitations were minimized. One of the major limitations was the lack of diversity conducted during the survey. Specifically, by limiting the survey to only federal fire departments, the successes or failures of civilian fire service organizations were omitted from this study. This limitation could not be overcome, since data from agencies that were not affiliated with the DoD would skew the results and findings for this research. Finally, the author recognized the fact that personal interviews with the staff of the Air Force Academy included emotional responses. These responses may be as a result of working in an organization that had not yet fully implemented NIMS.

Statistical Analysis

For the purposes of this project, the author has chosen to analyze two facets of the research: (a) an analysis of the obstacles of NIMS implementation within a DoD fire department, and (b) actions others are taking to implement NIMS. The result of the statistical analysis is provided in the next section of this research project.

Definition of Acronyms

AB – Air Base

AFB – Air Force Base

ANG – Air National Guard

AFIMS – Air Force Incident Management System

DoD – Department of Defense

EAFSOEM – Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management

EOC – Emergency Operations Center

FSTR – Full Spectrum Threat Response

HSPD – Homeland Security Presidential Directive

ICS – Incident Command System

MSCA – Military Support to Civil Authorities

NAS – Naval Air Station

NIMS – National Incident Management System

NFPA – National Fire Protection Association

NRP – National Response Plan

UC – Unified Command

WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction

Results

The results of this research project were compiled from the literature review and the procedures outlined in the previous section. The research questions were answered using periodicals, books, personal observations, interviews, and a survey that was sent to every DoD fire department. The results of each research question are provided here.

Research Question 1: What are the statutory requirements for implementing NIMS at a military installation?

On the surface, this would seem to be an easy research question to answer, but the author decided to include this research question in an effort to shed light on the fact that in addition to civilian statutory requirements, a federal fire department also has other requirements that may conflict with these requirements.

In order to answer this question, three areas were looked at: (a) National documents, (b) DoD directives, and (c) Air Force instructions. From a national standpoint, HSPD-5 (2003) and

NIMS (2004) were reviewed. An argument could be made that HSPD-5 directs federal agencies to comply with the NIMS, because it clearly identifies federal entities throughout the document. Although NIMS does mention federal agencies in various parts of the plan, the introduction by Secretary Ridge ties compliance to federal preparedness assistance. Since the federal government knows that federal agencies cannot qualify for this funding, more research was required. This tie-in to funding certainly was not meant to entice federal entities to comply with NIMS implementation.

The Department of Defense has long known that it will provide assistance to the civilian community, upon request. DoD Directive 3025.1 *Military Support to Civil Authorities* (1993), provided commanders at military installation with the not only the authority, but it actually directs them to help the civilian authorities in times of need. The Air Force updated its own guidance in Air Force Instruction 10-802, *Military Support to Civil Authorities* (2002). This instruction furthered the notion that military commanders will assist the civilian community in their time of need. The document also mentions for the first time that this support is part of the new Department of Homeland Security, "MSCA operations are a part of the nation's Homeland Security campaign" (p. 3).

Finally, the Air Force "Civil Engineer", Major General L. D. Fox entered the discussion regarding implementation of NIMS. It should be noted that Fox is responsible for emergency management, disaster preparedness, and emergency response for all of the Air Force. Fox pleaded for patience in the implementation of NIMS within the Air Force (L.D. Fox, personal communication, April 7, 2005). Fox ordered that individual installations to not fully implement NIMS, nor even construct emergency operations centers until additional guidance was provided, and an Air Force-specific NIMS (to be known as AFIMS) is created.

Summary of results for research question 1

In summary, the author found that guidance provided to all fire service organizations was clear, and that a solid argument could be made that the DoD does have a statutory requirement to implement NIMS. While there are no funding benefits associated with compliance by federal entities, the argument is still valid. The guidance provided by both the DoD and the Air Force is very clear. Military authorities must respond into the community (upon request), and therefore be tasked to operating within their system of incident management. Accordingly, the requirement for federal fire departments to use NIMS becomes even clearer. The only gray area left for debate after this research is when should the Air Force begin implementation? The general officer in charge of emergency response forces undoubtedly wants the Air Force to slow down and wait for additional guidance.

Research Question 2: What are the benefits with implementing NIMS within a fire service organization?

The literature review for this research question was extensive, and provided a variety of benefits and disadvantages to the NIMS process. As the implementation date got closer, many of the negative comments in the written media seemed to fade.

Regarding implementation of the NIMS, some did not think it was possible, and in fact thought that it was criminal to even try (Manning, 2003). Manning stated, " … we'd invest millions of dollars … in a system that most don't use or need" (p. 10). Another critic of the NIMS process felt that the benefits of the system were not realistic for day-to-day emergencies. (Kreis, 2004). Kreis did, however, say, " … we should all use a common command system in a national emergency" (p. 73). Others thought the process was too slow in developing (Ames, 2004). Even as late as 2005, some thought that the NIMS implementation process was still a

work in progress (Friel & Singer, 2005), while other thought that NIMS was not the "one size fits all" answer (Halton, 2005).

The benefits of NIMS implementation were far reaching and much publicized in a variety of literature available for review. The author of this research found data in fire service publications, but in a wide variety of non-fire publications as well. *Officer Review*, *National Journal*, *Engineering Management Journal*, *Military & Aerospace Electronics*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, each provided interesting insights to the benefits of NIMS. Lazur (2004) found that NIMS would enhance our preparedness through pre-incident mitigation, one of the main objectives of NIMS. Anderson et al (2004) felt that NIMS would help the fire service prepare to face the threats of a post 9/11 world. They stated that, "In today's complex and challenging world … terrorism activities present additional challenges for a traditional ICS structure" (p. 4).

Many fire service journals were touting the benefits of NIMS. Brown (2005) stated that NIMS could be used to guide key decisions, sort of like a checklist, and would be very effective in disaster management. Brown (2005) tells us that NIMS integrates the best incident management tools into one system. Reardon (2005) thought that one of the benefits of NIMS is that it will allow us to tweak our existing ICS structure, to make it stronger. Finally, Wilmoth (2005) agreed that we should give NIMS a chance.

Summary of results for research question 2

In summary, the author found that the literature review provided data that supported the hypothesis that NIMS implementation provided positive management benefits to fire service organizations. The benefits of NIMS clearly outweigh the detractors that were highly publicized early in the process. Common terminology and structure clearly provide benefits in multi-jurisdictional responses, no matter how small or large the incident. In addition, an argument

could certainly be made that preparedness for national disasters has certainly improved since the introduction of NIMS.

Research Question 3: What obstacles are there to implementing NIMS within a DoD fire department?

To answer this research question, a survey was conducted and personal interviews were performed.

Survey

In an effort to study the problem from a national level, a survey was conducted. The purpose of this survey was to determine what obstacles organizations within the federal sector were encountering when implementing NIMS. The survey allowed respondents to check off specific obstacles, or to provide their own answers. The results of the survey are provided in the table below:

Table 3

Survey Results

Obstacles encountered	Number answering "Yes"	Percentage of survey pool
Absence of perceived need	7	21%
Absence of support from leadership	3	9%
Lack of participation in the process	9	27%
Lack of understanding of the process	9	27%
No funding for the fire department for NIMS	8	24%
No funding for the installation for NIMS	5	15%
No guidance for how to implement NIMS	8	24%
Paradigm shift needed by leadership	6	18%
Perception that NIMS will not work	2	5%
Training issues/lack of training	4	12%

Note: Data assimilated from 34 surveys received from DoD fire departments

Based on the information obtained from the survey, the author determined that the obstacles to NIMS implementation were as varied as the installations themselves. While lack of participation in the process and lack of understanding of the process certainly garnered the most

responses, there was nothing that really stood out as the over-arching reason for not implementing NIMS immediately. Interestingly enough, only 2 respondents felt that there was a perception that NIMS would not work.

Personal interviews and survey comments

During the course of personal interviews, and in reading the comments that survey respondents provided, several insights regarding obstacles to NIMS implementation were discovered. "Leadership on the Air Force Academy does not know much about NIMS" (C. Shultz, personal communication, January 13, 2006). Shultz also noted that there is a definite lack of understanding how different agencies will interact with each other within NIMS. "People are comfortable with the Air Force style of IMS…" (R. Celentano, personal communication, January 16, 2006). Celentano went on to say. "Terminology is the biggest obstacle to NIMS right now".

"The biggest obstacle that I have found is the high turn over of Air Force officers {the leadership on a military installation}. This turn over requires a lot of effort to spin up the new leaders on what NIMS is all about" (K. Helgerson, personal communication, February 15, 2006). Helgerson also pointed out that there is a limited corporate knowledge level of NIMS, combined with little field experience. He stated that the lack of field experience led to a comfort level with the existing system and a resistance to change.

In an effort to get NIMS implemented at a DoD installation, one of the respondents to the survey provided this insight, "The fire department has developed the training … there just isn't any command support to get people to attend" (W. Heller, personal communication, January 21, 2006). Another respondent said, "The biggest obstacle for implementation is from the military, which is not used to functioning under the domestic style command and control" (P. Saunders, personal communication, January 23, 2006). Most respondents provided a similar obstacle on

the survey document under "other", which in some manner stated that until new procedures are developed at the DoD level, they would not be implementing NIMS right away.

Summary of results for research question 3

In summary, it was determined through the interviewing of emergency management professionals, and through the review of candid survey responses that other there are definite obstacles to implementing NIMS on a military installation. The obstacles ranged from public perception or lack of understanding of the process as a whole. In no case was it discovered that NIMS could not be implemented.

Research Question 4: What actions are other DoD fire departments taking to implement NIMS?

To answer this research question, much like research question three, survey results were studied and personal interviews were performed.

Personal interviews and survey comments

This research question proved to be the most difficult to answer, due to the lack of detailed responses to the question. Fortunately, the personal interviews helped overcome some of this limitation. Shultz said, "Senior leadership is taking the lead by making folks take the NIMS training …" (C. Shultz, personal communication, January 13, 2006). Shultz went on to say, "At most bases, the fire chief has taken the lead to act as an advocate for NIMS". Helgerson had an additional perspective, "Some bases are developing simple exercises to test the new organizational structure … including adding elements of NIMS in monthly fire department training schedules" (K. Helgerson, personal communication, February 15, 2006). Helgerson also stated, "Local emergency response plans are being changed to mirror the templates and the communication structures in NIMS".

In response to the survey, one respondent seemed to have a handle on the entire process, "We provided NIMS training, integrated new terminology into our SOPs [standard operating procedures] and exercised the new procedures both in house and with the surrounding communities" (T. Mylett, personal communication, January 22, 2006). Another respondent seemed to be very focused on just the training, "First we sent all chief officers to a forty hour NIMS course, then brought in a private contractor … trained all fire department personnel and began to introduce the process to other command level (non-fire) personnel" (J. Sack, personal communication, February 11, 2006). Marshall provided a similar perspective, "We are providing on-going training to all personnel, and have updated our standard operating guides" (R. Marshall, personal communication, January 18, 2006). The more surveys that were returned, the more evident it became that training was the focus of implementation efforts. Wilkes stated, "All personnel participate in the NIMS training, and we have written NIMS into our formal training program" (C. Wilkes, personal communication, January 21, 2006). Ford's implementation strategy included, " … purchasing integrated emergency management software …" (T. Ford, personal communication, January 13, 2006).

Summary of results for research question 4

In summary, it was determined through the review of personal interviews and survey comments that some organizations have started to implement NIMS in some fashion or another throughout the DoD. Of the 34 respondents to the survey, 12 (or 35%) are reporting that they are NIMS compliant. While this may certainly be the case, the comments provided from the respondents revealed a lack of hard evidence to prove that. Specifically, a majority of the 12 respondents only reported that training had been completed, nothing else. This may be a

limitation in the survey, and has resulted in a specific recommendation. This recommendation is provided in the appropriate section of this research.

Discussion/Implications

The result of this research revealed several factors that influenced the decision to seek NIMS compliance at the Air Force Academy. This research showed that when comparing virtues of NIMS implementation versus the obstacles (perceived or otherwise), the answer was simple; it is not that difficult to pursue NIMS compliance, and the benefits far outweigh the alternatives.

The research showed that there are many benefits and few obstacles to NIMS compliance on a federal installation. These benefits were highlighted in the survey and through the literature review. In addition, the research showed that there were sufficient statutory requirements that would compel a DoD fire department to seek compliance with NIMS. Well before NIMS was published, the DoD directed that the military will provide support to civil authorities during times of need in the community (1993). The HSPD-5 (2003) implored all agencies, including federal agencies, to cooperate with each other in a domestic incident management role. When NIMS was published (2004), it specifically stated that federal agencies will comply with the new system.

The direction of NIMS implementation for an Air Force fire department, however, is somewhat convoluted. During the course of the research, the author discovered a document which in essence states that NIMS implementation should be delayed, in lieu of an Air Force-specific program that was being developed (L.D. Fox, personal communication, April 7, 2005). Regardless of all the other data uncovered, the resulting conclusion can only be that NIMS must

be delayed within the Air Force. While certainly steps can be taken to begin the process, this document directed that final implementation cannot be accomplished as of this time.

During the course of literature review for the benefits of NIMS, much data were available on this subject that aided in the final recommendations of this research. A comment made by Manning (2003) left the reader wondering if NIMS would ever be implemented, as Manning felt that the system is not really suited for an urban crisis. In an article on ICS, Kreis (2004) agreed with Manning in the assertion that NIMS was too large for bread and butter operations. Ames (2004) felt that the process was developing too slowly, and that to be successful, decisions had to be made and priorities delineated. In a recent article depicting the government as being unprepared for the next catastrophic event, Friel & Singer (2005) felt that the system was still a work in progress. Halton (2005) agreed, "One size does not fit all" (p. 24). This was an important finding to this research, since the leadership at the Air Force Academy was not fully aware of all the potential pitfalls associated with NIMS. This was not, however the end of the research. Much literature was reviewed that provided an alternate point of view.

In an early article written about terrorist attacks, Lazur (2004) highlighted the fact that preparation was the key to success, and that NIMS would help responders prepare. Brown (2005), in an article about wild land fire fighting, felt that NIMS would help multi-jurisdictional agencies work together. These two points proved to make the point that NIMS certainly had advantages worth considering on a local level, even if the Air Force had not yet achieved compliance on a corporate level. In an excellent article on the backbone of NIMS, Brown (2005) felt that the framework for disaster management was the biggest benefit of NIMS. Reardon (2005) tells us that NIMS was developed by the fire service for the fire service, and Wilmoth (2005) felt that we should give NIMS a chance to work. This literature review has been

presented to the leadership at the Air Force Academy for review and discussion. The outcome of these discussions will drive the implementation strategy on a local level.

The survey showed that there are few actual obstacles to NIMS implementation at a military installation. Some of the obstacles that were encountered included lack of understanding and a perceived lack of direction. Most installations were working under the assumption that since the Air Force had decided to develop their own system, they could "back burner" this issue until that was complete. This was an interesting finding, because the reality of it is that some strategies can be implemented immediately, even without further guidance. During the course of this research, the author found that the NIMS is indeed the industry standard, and should be used as a template for any Air Force-specific program under development.

The survey also revealed some interesting facts regarding how the 12 respondents to the survey that reported NIMS compliance were successful. Many of the comments that were returned included references to NIMS training, and the implementation of new standard operating procedures. One of the most stunning revelations of this part of the research was how many of the organizations were reporting compliance, when in fact they had only just completed the training. During the course of the interviews, a similar situation was found. Three of the experts that were interviewed provided similar points of view regarding compliance, but really could not put their finger on exactly how to a affect paradigm shift on a military base that would lead to an effective implementation strategy

Recommendations

The problem, as previously stated, was that the Air Force Academy fire department does not know if NIMS can be implemented at an Air Force installation without a paradigm shift by

military leadership, and, as a result, the department may be wasting valuable financial and personnel resources towards trying to implement the National Incident Management System (NIMS) at the Air Force Academy. The results of this research indicated that NIMS implementation could begin the Air Force Academy, and no indicators were uncovered that would lead one to believe otherwise. The single letter from the Pentagon that required the use of an Air Force developed IMS would not serve to stop the process of at least beginning the adoption of the NIMS model. In addition, it was shown that the benefits of NIMS implementation far outweigh the costs associated with the process. The research presented in this study led to the following recommendations:

1. Obtain support from the Air Force Academy leadership to pursue the immediate implementation of NIMS.
2. Obtain approval to budget for the necessary resources implement NIMS.
3. Solicit support at the DoD level to encourage other federal fire departments to implement NIMS.
4. Publish information that can be shared with other DoD agencies regarding the NIMS process.
5. Conduct additional research to determine what successful implementation strategies have been implemented at various DoD installation.

It is the author's recommendation that since NIMS can be implemented at an Air Force installation without a significant paradigm shift by military leadership and without wasting valuable financial and personnel resources that efforts should be made to immediately begin the implementation process, even while waiting for final guidance from higher headquarters.

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Appendix A

Executive Fire Officer Program National Incident Management (NIMS) Survey

Name/location of your organization: _____

Your name {optional}: _____

Your title: _____

1. Have you fully implemented NIMS?

   □ Yes

   □ No

2. If no, please indicate from list below why you have not (if yes, skip to question #3):

   □ No statutory requirement to do so

   □ Absence of support from installation leadership (perceived or actual)

   □ No guidance from higher headquarters

   □ No funding for NIMS training for the fire department

   □ No funding for NIMS training for the installation

   □ Lack of participation by other organizations on the installation (other than Fire)

   □ Perception that NIMS will not work on a DoD installation

   □ Lack of understanding of the system

   □ Absence of perceived need

   □ Other (please specify): _____

_____

_____

_____

3. What actions have you taken to implement NIMS (be specific)?

_____

_____

_____

4. If you have implemented NIMS, please indicate below any obstacles that you may have encountered during the process:

   □ Lack of understanding of NIMS

   □ Lack of funding

   □ Training issues

   □ Paradigm shift by leadership

   □ Absence of perceived need

   □ Inertia (getting the process started)

   □ Other (please specify): _____

_____

_____

5. Please list any written guidance from your branch of service that requires you to implement NIMS:

_____

_____

6. Other comments?

_____

_____

_____

Please return this survey by 15 February via e-mail to: ernst.piercy@usafa.af.mil (preferred method) or FAX to: 719-333-3740/DSN 333-3740.

Appendix B

List of Fire Departments Surveyed

NIMS-compliant fire departments:

1. Aviano AB, Italy
2. Corpus Christi NAS, TX
3. Davis-Monthan AFB, NM
4. Duluth ANG, MN
5. Ellsworth AFB, SD
6. Grandforks AFB, ND
7. Meridian ANG, MS
8. Miramar Marine Corps Air Station, CA
9. Sioux Falls ANG, SD
10. Tinker AFB, OK
11. Truex ANG, WI
12. Yuma Marine Corps Air Station, AZ

Non-compliant fire departments:

1. Barstow Air Station, CA
2. Camp Lejeune, NC
3. Ceiba NAS, Puerto Rico
4. Cherry Point, NC
5. Dover AFB, DE
6. Elmendorf AFB, AK
7. FE Warren AFB, WY
8. Hanscom AFB, MA
9. Hickam AFB, HI
10. Jacksonville NAS, FL
11. Lakenheath AB, England
12. Malmstrom AFB, MT
13. Nevada ANG, NV
14. Nevada Test Range, NV
15. New Orleans NAS, LA
16. Pease AFB, NH
17. Peterson AFB, CO
18. Quantico, VA
19. Ramstein AB, Germany
20. Robins AFB, GA
21. Selfridge AFB, MI
22. Sigonella NAS, Italy

Appendix C

List of Experts

1. Allen Thomason, Retired Battalion Chief, San Diego Fire Department. Chief Thomason, after his retirement, became an instructor at the National Fire Academy, and teaches NIMS as part of the EAFSOEM curriculum.
2. Catherine Shultz, Emergency Management Technician. Ms. Shultz has been involved in Emergency Management for the last 5 years, and is responsible for developing a NIMS implementation plan for the Air Force Academy.
3. Ron Celentano, Emergency Management Technician. Mr. Celentano has 20 years experience in Emergency Management, and is responsible for disaster preparedness training on the Air Force Academy.
4. Chief Master Sergeant Ken Helgerson, retired Fire Chief, McChord Air Force Base, Washington. Chief Helgerson has been involved in NIMS implementation at two fire and emergency services organizations.